



## *AOT in Action*

### ***TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

Last week, AOT co-sponsored the Border Trade Alliance's Regional Meeting in Nogales on December 11. The BTA hosts these regional meetings to facilitate discussion between policy makers and local stakeholders on issues affecting our borders. I had the honor of being a panelist for the meeting to discuss The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) and its implications on the border region. We also addressed the impact that WHTI could have on tourism on both a national and state level.

Participants included representatives from the border community including the Nogales Chamber of Commerce, the Mexican Consul in Nogales, and Rocky Point Reservations. Federal representatives from the U.S. Department of State's WHTI office and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in Washington, D.C. also attended the meeting and gave the most up-to-date information on the WHTI implementation dates and WHTI compliant documents.

In January 2007, the first stage of WHTI recommendations was implemented for air travel only. Although the law says WHTI has until June 2009 to be fully implemented, it is anticipated that WHTI will be in place for land and sea travel by summer 2008. Beginning January 31, 2008, CBP will no longer accept oral declarations for citizenship and U.S. citizens crossing land and sea ports of entry in the Western Hemisphere will be required to show a government issued ID like a driver's license, along with proof of U.S. citizenship, like a birth certificate.


Currently, it is estimated that only 20 percent of U.S. citizens who frequently cross the border have a passport. The travel industry has been lobbying for a low-cost alternative to the passport to guarantee that travelers have options. Governor Napolitano has been a strong advocate for increasing security at our nation's ports of entry, while ensuring that trade and tourism continue to flourish.

This December, Governor Napolitano and DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff signed a Memorandum of Agreement to move forward on creating a 3-in-1 ID/Enhanced Driver's License

for Arizona. This WHTI compliant document will be a low-cost alternative to a passport and allow Arizona residents who are U.S. citizens to cross land and sea ports of entry within the Western Hemisphere. The State Department also has plans to issue a Passport Card (PASS Card), which will allow U.S. citizens to cross land and sea ports of entry. The PASS Card is anticipated to be available by spring 2008.

AOT will continue to post updates on the agency's Web site, [www.arizonaguide.com](http://www.arizonaguide.com). Passport information is also available at [www.getapassportnow.com](http://www.getapassportnow.com).

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## AOT News Flash

### Arizona Recognized as Number One Golf Destination in North America

It's a hole in one for Arizona! The Grand Canyon State has been recognized as the number one golf destination in North America by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO). Barbara Jackson, AOT's Mexico representative accepted the award in a recent ceremony at the International Golf Travel Market Awards Gala on December 6, 2007, in the Gran Melia Hotel in Cancun, Mexico. IAGTO is the global trade organization for the golf tourism industry, comprising more than 1,040 companies in 73 countries, including more than 320 golf tour operators in 45 countries. The IAGTO Awards, in association with Hertz, are the official annual awards for the golf tourism industry. For more information, please visit [www.iagto.com](http://www.iagto.com).

## Trippin' with AOT

### Arizona Enjoys Statewide Exposure to London Show

Arizona was very well represented recently during World Travel Market in London. World Travel Market is the premier global event for the travel industry and the largest travel trade show in the United Kingdom. The event, held November 12-15, showcased vacation destinations from around the world and attracted travel professionals and media from all over the UK and Europe. In addition to the AOT staff, the Arizona delegation consisted of the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Scottsdale CVB, Tucson CVB, Flagstaff CVB, The Radisson Fort McDowell Resort and Casino, Red Rock Jeep Tours of Sedona, Tanque Verde Guest Ranch in Tucson, White Stallion Ranch in Tucson, and Papillon/Grand Canyon Airlines. During the four-day show, appointments were held with nearly 30 tour operators to review their current destinations and to look at ways to expand their Arizona product information to increase

the number of visitors to the Grand Canyon State. For additional information or a copy of the World Travel Market Lead report contact Kristy Swanson on 602 3643696 or via e-mail at [kmckinnon@azot.gov](mailto:kmckinnon@azot.gov).

### **AOT to Conduct Sales Mission in Mexico**

Mexico is one of Arizona's most important international markets. To further increase awareness of the Grand Canyon State, AOT will coordinate a sales mission to Mexico in February 2008, which is open to participation. Each year, the Arizona Office of Tourism coordinates a sales mission to reach out to the second tier cities in Mexico – cities that aren't typically reached through the agency's other promotions. This year AOT will target three cities in Northern Mexico including Chihuahua, Monterrey and Culiacan during a five-day mission scheduled for the week of February 25 – 29, 2008. AOT will host breakfast seminars in each city and invite local travel agents and tour operators to attend. For additional information and to obtain a participation form, please contact Loretta Belonio at 602 364 3725 or via e-mail at [lbelonio@azot.gov](mailto:lbelonio@azot.gov).

### **German Trade Show Opportunity**

The Arizona Office of Tourism would like to invite you to join us at International Tourismus Boerse (ITB), the largest travel industry trade show in the world. ITB will be held March 5 - 9, 2008 in Berlin, Germany and more than 1000,000 trade visitors and 11,000 exhibitors from 180 countries are expected to attend. ITB is not an appointment show; however, Arizona's representatives in Germany do schedule appointments with German, Austrian and Swiss tour operators and media representatives. Participation fees are (excluding travel): DMOs: \$2,000 for the primary delegate and \$500 for the second delegate. Suppliers: \$1,500 for primary delegate and \$500 for the second delegate. Please contact Loretta Belonio at 602 364 3725 or via e-mail at [lbelonio@azot.gov](mailto:lbelonio@azot.gov), if you are interested in attending.

### **Vancouver Trade Show Participation and Brochure Distribution Opportunity**

AOT invites you to exhibit at the Vancouver Golf & Travel Show in Vancouver, BC February 16-17, 2008. This consumer show expects to attract more than 20,000 Canadian golf enthusiasts over three days. Space is limited. The cost is \$800 plus travel expenses and shipping expenses. Additionally, AOT is offering the opportunity to have your brochures distributed for \$200, plus shipping. Please call for details. Space is limited. If you are interested in participating in this event, please contact Kristy Swanson at [kswanson@azot.gov](mailto:kswanson@azot.gov) or call 602-364-3696.

## **Industry News**

### **U.S., China Sign Pact to Increase Leisure Travel to the U.S.**

U.S. and Chinese officials meeting Tuesday in Beijing signed an agreement expected to increase by hundreds of thousands the number of Chinese who visit the U.S. each year. The U.S. Commerce Department says the agreement will result in about 580,000 Chinese arrivals annually by 2011, up 78 percent from now. Currently, China allows only travelers with a business, government or educational reason to visit the U.S. As a result of the memorandum of understanding signed by Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, the communist government is adding the U.S. to a list of approved destinations for group tours. China has similar agreements in place with other countries, including Australia, Malaysia and Canada. "Today's agreement will open a large and growing market for the U.S. tourism industry, Gutierrez said in a statement. (Page 1B, USA Today; [www.TravelWeekly.com](http://www.TravelWeekly.com); Special to TA)

The signing of the MOU on tourism with China drew immediate plaudits from the U.S. travel industry. Roger Dow, president and CEO of the Travel Industry Association, said the agreement

"ensures a bright future for Chinese travel to the U.S." TIA has hosted pavilions to market America's destinations at China's largest travel show, CITM, the last two years. In response to the announcement, the National Tour Association said it had already submitted a proposal to the Department of Commerce to create a program in conjunction with U.S. tour operators to provide group tours for Chinese travelers. NYC & Co., New York's tourism and marketing organization, also hailed the agreement, saying it was "a valuable advancement for the United States' travel and tourism industry." ([www.TravelWeekly.com](http://www.TravelWeekly.com); [www.TravelAgentCentral.com](http://www.TravelAgentCentral.com); *Special to TA*)

### **Don't Fear Traveler Review Sites – Use Them to Increase Market Share**

As our vocabularies have become peppered with words like Google, YouTube, TripAdvisor and "del.icio.us", a sea change has occurred in hospitality marketing, writes Greg Leddy, Managing Director of Ferri & Partners in the latest issue of [Caribbean Hotel and Restaurant Buyer's Guide](#). Not only has the playing field been leveled for many small- and medium-size hotels, but marketing has been turned on its head as the consumer has taken charge. The driving force behind all this is the phenomena called "Social Media" or "Social Networking", the countless blogs, chatrooms, hotel rating sites, podcasts, etc. that now allow consumers to share their experiences and opinions with fellow travelers worldwide.

Social media has given the traveler a distinct and very loud voice. Obviously, these empowered consumers have the potential to inflict incredible damage on a hotel's reputation. Bad news, as they say, travels fast. But in the viral online environment of the Internet, bad news travels even faster and wider. You only need to scroll through a few pages of TripAdvisor.com, Expedia or Hotels.com to understand that fact or, (much) worse, to be on the receiving end of a flurry of negative comments on any social site. But if you look at social media from an entirely different perspective, you can see that it also can be a tool to enhance and protect your business. For one, hotel reviews can be far more positive than negative. In fact, a Texas A&M study involving TripAdvisor users concludes that "online travel review writers are mostly motivated by a concern for other consumers and helping a travel service provider." The study indicates that "venting negative feelings or receiving rewards for postings are not seen as important motives."

### **Meetings Headed Downtown**

As American cities are spruced up and their new desirability draws waves of residents, meeting planners are also taking a second look. But cities will have to adapt to meet this new market. "Cities need to show meeting planners that they have more than just a big convention center, so they are taking a more creative role," hospitality industry consultant Mark Eble told *MeetingsFocus.com*. "The CVBs have spent a lot of time and money seeing what groups want. One of the things they want is entertainment, and cities are working hard to give this to them" added the regional vice president for PKF Consulting in Indianapolis. He points out that much of the nation's newfound appreciation for downtown amenities is happening in second- and third-tier convention cities, many of which have discovered they need more restaurants, clubs and sightseeing attractions to support their new or expanded convention centers. Downtown entertainment districts have become the new must-haves for cities hoping to attract convention delegates and other visitors. Cities around the country are developing complexes offering restaurants and clubs within walking distance of their convention centers. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)